

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

The Ripper murders
The legend of King Arthur
Triangle—the truth
Astronaut ancestors?
Stars over Atlantis

65



THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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Contents

King Arthur

THE LEGEND OF KING ARTHUR

The first of a new series that investigates the myth and the reality of England's romantic hero

Paul Begg

1281

Bermuda Triangle

SUNK WITHOUT TRACE

Could these inexplicable disappearances be caused by some phenomenon unknown to science?

Paul Begg

1286

Ripper murders

THE MURDERS AND THE MEDIUM

Did a medium really unveil the identity of Victorian London's most notorious murderer?

Melvin Harris

1290

Ancient astronauts

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

We look at the links between prehistoric spacemen, folk tales and modern UFO encounters

Peter James

1294

Constellations

THE LAMPS OF ATLANTIS?

A fascinating look at the connections between the star pictures and ancient Atlantis

Archie Roy

1298

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In next week's issue

The subject of people mysteriously vanishing has attracted a lot of attention in recent years – but are these cases all they are made out to be? Find out in a new series called **Disappearances**.

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One of the best-known heroes of all time is King Arthur, saviour of Britain, 'the once and future king'. PAUL BEGG tells of his legendary exploits and investigates the timeless appeal of the Arthurian romances

THE MERE MENTION of King Arthur and the Round Table is enough to conjure up images of gallantry and romance: towering castles, white chargers, flashing sword blades . . . This is the very stuff of childhood dreams and the inspiration of generations of poets and artists. The names of those champions of chivalry: Arthur, Bedivere, Galahad, Gawain, Lancelot, Perceval, Tristram, Galahad; they are imbued with a singular vibrancy and resonance, which has echoed down the centuries.

It was at a great feast in London that Uther Pendragon, King of England, first set eyes on the beautiful Ygraine (sometimes called Igerna), the wife of his trusted friend and most loyal supporter Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, and was immediately overcome by the desire to possess her. His intentions were perceived by Gorlois, who shut Ygraine away in the impregnable castle at Tintagel. Beside himself with passion, Uther sought the help of Merlin, the master magician, and was given a potion that made him look exactly like Gorlois. Thus disguised, Uther had no trouble entering Tintagel Castle and Ygraine's bed. That night Arthur was conceived – and that same night Gorlois was killed by Uther's men. Uther and Ygraine promptly married.

Merlin claimed the newborn Arthur and entrusted him to the care of a knight named

Right: Uther Pendragon and the magician Merlin plot the ravishing of Ygraine, wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, as she looks on with misgiving – an illustration from the medieval *Chronicle of England* by Peter of Langtoft

Below: the ruins of Tintagel Castle in Cornwall. It was here that, according to legend, Arthur was conceived



Ector, who raised Arthur as his own, the younger brother of his son Kay. When Arthur was almost 15, Merlin summoned the nobility of the land to London. Outside the church where everyone gathered one Sunday for Mass there was a stone with an anvil embedded in it, and protruding from the anvil there was a magnificent sword. Engraved on the stone were the words: WHOSOEVER PULLETH OUT THIS SWORD OF THIS STONE AND ANVIL IS RIGHTWISE KING BORN OF ALL ENGLAND.

Many lords and knights tried to draw the sword from the stone, but all failed to do so. Yet when Arthur tried to draw the sword it slid free without effort. He was proclaimed king, much to the fury of many great nobles, among them Loth of Lothian, and there followed many years of bitter fighting before they accepted Arthur as their king.

To make peace Loth sent his beautiful wife Morgause on an embassy to Arthur. Unaware that she was his half sister, one of three daughters born to Ygraine and Gorlois, Arthur made love to her and she conceived a child. Merlin prophesied that the boy born of

The legend of King Arthur



Arthur's unwitting incest would bring about the destruction of the kingdom. The child was named Mordred.

Meanwhile, in combat, Arthur had broken the sword drawn from the stone. Merlin had taken him to a lake and there he had been given a magic sword called Excalibur by a powerful fay – someone who possessed magical powers – the Lady of the Lake.

Arthur later married Guinevere and received a magnificent round table as a wedding present. Around this table sat the knights of Arthur's court. However, one seat, the 'Siege Perilous', was left vacant, reserved for the one knight who would succeed in the quintessentially spiritual quest for the Grail, the holiest relic in Christendom.

The adventures of the knights are full of supernatural marvels, but the most important theme in the Arthurian legend is the love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere. They became so indiscreet in their passion for each other that Arthur learned of it and was forced, by Mordred and his peers, to recognise it and accuse the couple publicly of adultery and treason. Lancelot, with Guinevere and many of the knights, fled to France, hotly pursued by Arthur's army. The forces met. Lives were lost and honour

Above: Arthur and his knights on a wild-animal hunt in an illustration by Gustav Doré of Lord Tennyson's epic poem *Idylls of the King*. Together with the romantic paintings of Arthurian legends by the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, Tennyson helped to create the popular image of the knights of the Round Table

Right: an early 16th-century illuminated manuscript, Flemish in origin, depicting two knights jousting before Arthur and his court. The winner of the ritual battle was considered to have won a moral as well as physical victory. The victor was also considered exceedingly glamorous, especially as it was believed to be a common practice for the knights to wear ladies' 'favours' – coloured scarves – to the joust and a victory could be seen as a symbolic kill for the lady's sake

besmirched. The code of chivalry, which had been the backbone of the Round Table, now became its weakness, propelling the participants on a tide of emotion towards a final, terrible catastrophe they were powerless to avert.

In Arthur's absence Mordred, left in England to tend the kingdom, raised an army and seized the crown. Arthur returned to England and his army eventually met Mordred's forces at Camlann. A terrible battle raged and many of the knights died. Arthur eventually delivered a mortal blow to Mordred, but before he died Mordred struck Arthur with his sword.

Dying, Arthur instructed Bedivere to throw Excalibur into the lake from which it had come. Bedivere hurled the great sword out as far as he could and an arm came out of the water, caught the sword and vanished. The mortally wounded king was then taken to the lake's edge, where a barge waited to carry him to the fairy isle of Avalon – widely believed to be Glastonbury – where it was said that he died. But the people refused to accept that King Arthur was dead and a rumour spread that there was written on his tomb: HIC IACET ARTHURUS REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS (Here lies Arthur, the once and future king).

This is the story of King Arthur as most people know it, their image perhaps having received additional colour via Hollywood. But where did this romanticised image come from?

It is widely believed, but by no means





proven, that there was a real Arthur active in the late fifth century, but it is an early yet unavoidable disappointment to learn that in history there was no Round Table, no magical castle called Camelot and no Lancelot. These are all medieval inventions. The whole paraphernalia of knighthood, armour, courtly love and epic gallantry is derived from conditions and ideals far removed from those the historic Arthur knew.

The story of Arthur was not born as a single cohesive narrative, but began life as a scattered collection of tales that originally probably had nothing to do with any discernible historical figure. These traditional tales were attached to a heroic figure and subsequently gathered into a single story to which writers added further adventures. The story of Arthur as it has come down to us – through Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and T.H. White's *The once and future king* – is a distillation of these many tales, which are collectively known as the Matter of Britain.

Arthur's fame spreads

The legend developed in the years following the Norman conquest of Britain in 1066. In Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, the Celtic fringe of the Anglo-Norman lands, the stories about Arthur had been preserved and were taken up by wandering minstrels. These storytellers spread the stories far and wide, and by the end of the 11th century Arthur was known throughout Europe. His fame is testified to by a stone carving above the northern doorway of Modena Cathedral in Italy, believed to date from before 1120, depicting a scene from an Arthurian story about the abduction of Guinevere and her rescue by Arthur.

About 1136 a Benedictine monk named Geoffrey of Monmouth gathered the pseudo-historical bardic tales, folklore and traditions and combined them with genuine history and a little imagination, to weave them into a single, cohesive narrative that he called the *Historia regum Britanniae* ('The history of the kings of Britain'), which has perhaps fairly been described as 'one of the most influential books ever written in this

Above: Arthur celebrated in a mosaic, dating from 1166, in Otranto Cathedral, Italy. Its origins are obscure but it seems likely that the Arthurian legends were taken to Italy by the Normans

Below: opening scenes of the 15th-century illuminated manuscript *Lancelot* showing (top left) the birth of Lancelot; (top right) Lancelot being brought up by the Lady of the Lake; (bottom left) Lancelot at a tournament and (bottom right) his vision of the Holy Grail

country.' Geoffrey presented the *Historia* as a genuine history, saying he had done no more than translate 'a certain very ancient book' that had been given to him by his friend Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford. Whether or not such a book ever really existed is open to debate, but the *Historia* was not a simple, straightforward translation of a single book. And neither was it a genuine history, as several contemporary writers recognised. One critic said that it 'was made up, partly by [Geoffrey] and partly by others, either from an inordinate love of lying, or for the sake of pleasing the Britons'.

The *Historia* begins with the founding of Britain by Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas, hero of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and continues through a long line of kings that includes such familiar names as Lear, Cymbeline and Coel (the Old King Cole of the nursery rhyme), down to Arthur, who occupies a fifth of the book.

Although the *Historia* gives the names of many now familiar people, places and things – Merlin, Guinevere, Mordred, Kay, Bedivere, Tintagel, Camlann, Avalon and Arthur's special sword, here named Caliburn – the story is firmly set in the fifth century and there is no Round Table, Lancelot, Galahad or Holy Grail.

The *Historia* was immensely popular and in it the Norman kings, having by now established their grip on conquered Britain, found a hero who was a worthy rival to Charlemagne, the legends about whom bestowed an enviable lustre on the kings of





France. Arthur had fought against the Saxons, the Normans had defeated them, and this at least gave the Normans a spiritual brotherhood with the native Britons and everything that Arthur stood for. However, it was in France that the stories about Arthur were developed.

About 1154, Robert Wace, a canon of Bayeux, wrote *Roman de Brut*, a reworking of Geoffrey's *Historia* with poetic amplifications, the most important of which was the introduction of the Round Table, here said to have been devised by Arthur so that no knight should have precedence. Wace says that the Bretons told many tales about the Round Table, but the form these stories took is lost in the mists of time. Later writers developed the theme of the Round Table and it became an exalted order of chivalry.

The single most influential author in the development of the Arthurian romances was Chrétien de Troyes. A Frenchman, it is he more than any other who can be held responsible for having determined the nature and significance of the legends in modern literature. Chrétien wrote several long verse romances: *Erec and Enid* (1170), in which Perceval and Lancelot make their first appearance in Arthurian literature; *Cligès* (1176); *Yvain and Lancelot* (both 1177), the latter being the first work to locate Arthur's

court at Camelot; and *Perceval* or *Conte du Graal* (1182), left unfinished after 9000 lines – of which more will be said later. He also wrote a poem about Tristram and Yseult (otherwise known as Isolde), but this has been lost. But what is probably de Troyes's chief contribution is the introduction of the important love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere.

About 1200 a Burgundian knight named Robert de Boron (or Borron) produced what has now become the standard legend of Arthur's early life, developing the importance of Merlin's role in the young hero's career. He also wrote the earliest surviving account of the early history of the Holy Grail and incorporated it into the Arthurian cycle.

Meanwhile, other writers – Thomas of England (c. 1160), Eilhart von Oberg (c. 1170), Beroul (c. 1190) and, of course, Chrétien de Troyes – had been developing the non-Arthurian story of Tristram and Isolde: despite their moral inhibitions and strong loyalties to others, Tristram and Isolde fall passionately in love because of an aphrodisiac and are gradually torn apart by their conflicting loyalties. In about 1230 a story called *Le roman de Tristan de Leonis* absorbed Tristram into the Arthurian cycle, making him a knight of the Round Table.



Far left: W. Hatherall's painting *The battle between King Arthur and Sir Mordred*, which hangs in the so-called King Arthur's Hall, Tintagel

Below left: the 19th-century vision of the death of Arthur, as epitomised by this tapestry design by Edward Burne-Jones

The enduring fascination with the Arthurian legend in the 20th century is reflected in numerous, if widely different, films. They include (right) the highly irreverent *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), and (below) the grimly realistic *Excalibur* (1981) starring Nigel Terry as Arthur. Others include Walt Disney's cartoon *The sword in the stone* (1963) and many undistinguished Hollywood movies

Between 1215 and 1230 an influential attempt was made to draw the great many Arthurian stories into a coherent whole in a series of French romances by different authors that are today known as the Vulgate cycle because they are widely regarded as the 'bible' of Arthurian literature. It is here that Galahad makes his first appearance, taking his place in the *Siege Perilous*.

About 1469 the finest flowering of the Arthurian legend was created under the pen of Sir Thomas Malory, a rogue whose career of violent crime had eventually landed him in Newgate gaol. It was here that he wrote *La morte d'Arthur* – the title was not Malory's, but was bestowed upon the book by William Caxton, who edited and printed it in 1485, 14 years after Malory's death.

The story of Arthur has attracted many writers and artists since Malory, including Edmund Spenser, Alfred Lord Tennyson, the Pre-Raphaelites, John Masefield, T.H. White, and more recently Mary Stewart. The cinema was a little late in taking up the theme and the Arthurian film cycle effectively began with a 15-episode serial produced in 1949, *The adventures of Sir Galahad*. But the Arthurian film really got under way in 1954 with the classic *Prince Valiant*, based on a comic strip created by



Hal Foster. More recently there have been Walt Disney's *The sword in the stone* and the musical *Camelot*, the black comedy *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, and the attempt to recapture the epic grandeur of the story, *Excalibur*.

Many people have offered theories to explain the deep and timeless appeal of the Arthurian legends. One suggestion worth comment is that underlying the stories runs the theme of supernatural forces controlling destiny. Such a theme most certainly exists, but it is not very inspiring. Uther, a good king, becomes the puppet of destiny when he seduces Ygraine and betrays and brings about the death of Gorlois. Galahad is likewise destined to achieve the quest for the Grail; Lancelot and Perceval are doomed to fail. And Mordred is destined to destroy Arthur and the Round Table. There is a strange, archetypal symbolism here, but watching a great king tumble headlong towards disaster can hardly account for the stories' lasting appeal.

Perhaps the story is a metaphor, the struggles of Arthur and his knights representing the struggles of life in general. Or maybe the answer is simply that whatever the generation, whatever the society, loyalty and honour are highly regarded values, epitomised by the knights of the Round Table. And, of course, there is a nagging desire to believe that somewhere, in some time or place, the whole story was true.

What was the mystic meaning of the search for the Holy Grail? See page 1314



Numerous tales of people, boats and aircraft vanishing without trace have been gathered by writers about the Bermuda Triangle to support their view that something weird is happening there. PAUL BEGG examines some of the claims

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE, an area of the western Atlantic where scores of ships and aircraft have disappeared without trace, has been described as one of the greatest true-life mysteries of all time. This is not simply because ships and aircraft have vanished there, but because – according to numerous writers and researchers – the disappearances are without explanation and must be caused by some ‘force’ or phenomenon unknown to science.

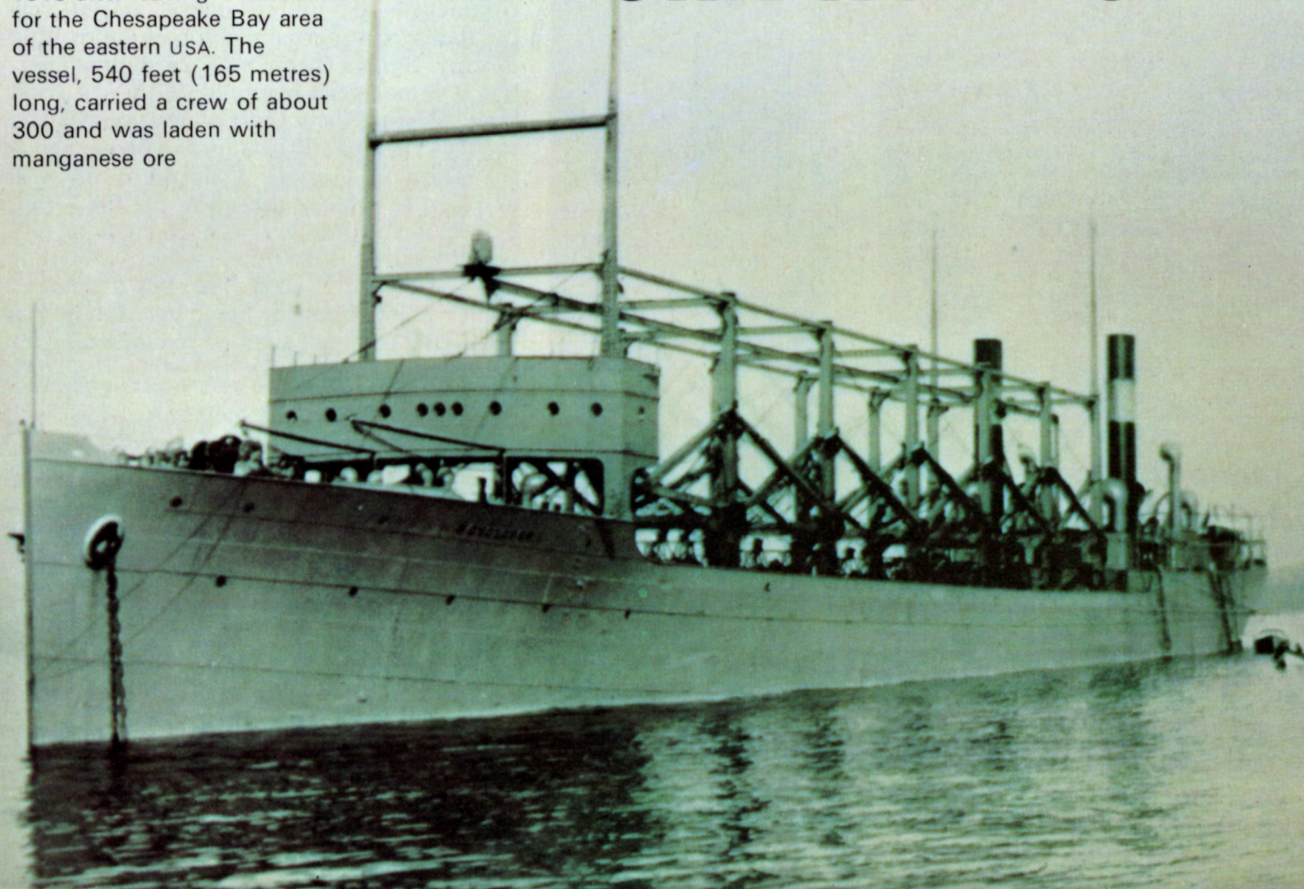
It is a very disturbing if not highly alarming claim, and there is little reassurance in the knowledge that the chances of disappearing in the Bermuda Triangle are less than for being killed while crossing the road. Precautions can be taken against the known dangers of the highway, but not against the unknown forces of the Bermuda Triangle. Every crossing of the region is potentially fatal, rather like every pull of the trigger in Russian roulette.

Few writers agree about the precise size and shape of the Bermuda Triangle. Richard Winer thinks it is a trapezium while John Wallace Spencer sees it as a scalene triangle;

The *Cyclops*, a US Navy collier, disappeared in March 1918 after leaving Barbados for the Chesapeake Bay area of the eastern USA. The vessel, 540 feet (165 metres) long, carried a crew of about 300 and was laden with manganese ore



Sunk without trace



Ivan T. Sanderson calls it 'a sort of funny blob'.

The number of disappearances is far from alarmingly high, as some writers contend. About 150,000 boats cross the Bermuda Triangle every year and on average about 10,000 send a distress call. However, only about 100 losses are recorded annually. While 100 losses are 100 too many it is not a significant proportion of 150,000 – 0.07 per cent, in fact.

As well as being subject to all the natural hazards of the sea – such as storms, hurricanes and waterspouts – the Triangle is the home of the Gulf Stream, a fast-moving body of water that can carry an unwary or inexperienced sailor miles off course in a matter of hours and quickly disperse wreckage.

However, when all is said and done, the backbone of the Triangle legend is that catalogue of disappearances and the claim that they defy rational explanation. Charles Berlitz, the best-known of many people who have written about the area, has stated that

All ship losses are mysterious inasmuch as relatively few captains set out to lose their ships. When the fate of a ship is established, or even assumed, the mystery ceases. This has not been the case with the many ships which have disappeared in the Sargasso Sea. It is there, or near there, that the majority of Bermuda Triangle losses have taken place, he says.

Let us now examine a random sample of

Left: disappearances in the Bermuda Triangle number about 100 annually. This reward poster drew attention to the mysterious fate of the yacht *Saba Bank*, which vanished while sailing from Nassau to Miami in April 1974

Below: the British freighter *Cyclops*, which went missing in the North Atlantic during the Second World War. It could have been torpedoed, but Charles Berlitz maintains that records show no German submarines to have been in the area when the ship disappeared

Bottom: the ss *Marine Sulphur Queen* left Beaumont, Texas, on 2 February 1963 bound for Norfolk, Virginia. She carried a cargo of molten sulphur and was last heard from on 4 February. An official investigation said the ship could have sunk because of an explosion, could have capsized in heavy seas, or its hull may have broken in two

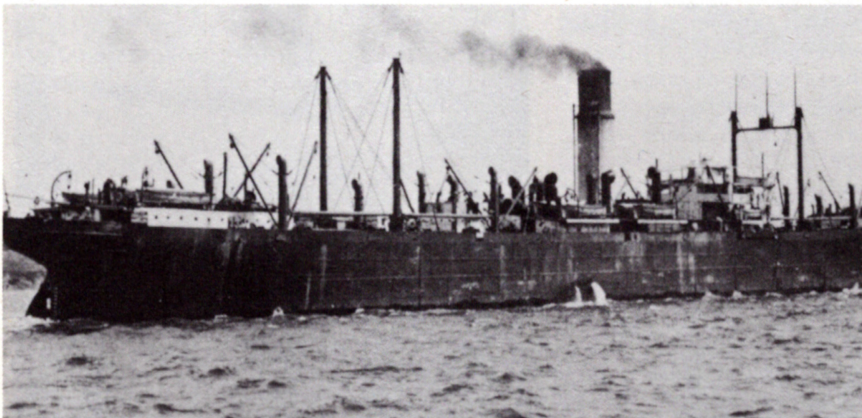
famous case of the Richard Tichborne inheritance. This ship did not disappear without trace. Wreckage from the vessel is said to have been found six days after she had left Rio, so assuming perfect sailing conditions and maximum speed, the nearest she could have been to the Bermuda Triangle when disaster struck was some 2000 miles (3200 kilometres) away.

A similar case is that of the German barque *Freya*. She is said to have sailed from Manzanillo, Cuba, in 1902 and to have been found in the Triangle abandoned by her crew and giving every appearance of having been caught in a particularly violent storm. Weather records apparently reveal that only light airs prevailed in the region at the time. The *Freya* was, however, in an area where submarine volcanic activity had been reported at about the same time as the ship was abandoned, and it is believed that this prompted the crew to abandon ship. Whether or not this explanation is correct does not really matter because the *Freya* did not sail from Manzanillo, Cuba, but from Manzanillo, Mexico, and she was not found abandoned in the Bermuda Triangle, nor even in the Atlantic Ocean, but in the Pacific.

No hint of mystery was ever attached to either the *Bella* or the *Freya* until writers began searching for Triangle fatalities. Other ships – the *Lotta*, *Viego*, and *Miramon* or *Miramonde* – could not be traced by this writer and it is questionable whether they ever existed.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, ships did not carry radio equipment. We cannot be certain of where they were when disaster struck or of what form the disaster took. For example, the *Atalanta* (not *Atlanta* as many authors call her) disappeared on an intended voyage of 3000 miles (4800 kilometres), only 500 miles (800 kilometres) of which were through the Bermuda Triangle. We do not know where she was when she was overwhelmed, but we do know that she had a crew of very inexperienced cadets and that severe storms swept her route.

The first radio-carrying vessel claimed by

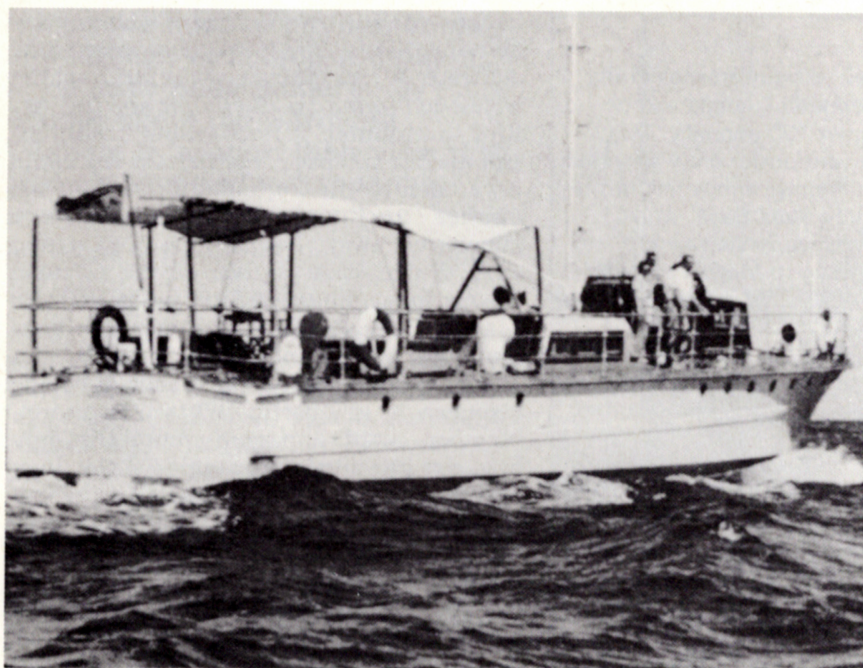


Triangle fatalities. The British ship *Bella* is said to have vanished in 1854 on a voyage from Rio de Janeiro to Jamaica. She is known to have been overloaded and is presumed to have capsized, but author Alan Landsberg has wondered why the vessel should have had a safe voyage until she entered the deadly Triangle.

The writer of this article has been unable to identify the *Bella*. Lloyd's have a record of a ship of that name built in Liverpool in 1852, but there is no suggestion that it suffered any misfortune. The only ship corresponding with the Triangle's *Bella* is a vessel of that name that is sometimes associated with the



Bermuda Triangle



the Bermuda Triangle was the 19,000-tonne collier *Cyclops* in March 1918. As with the *Atalanta*, her route was in the path of a severe storm, winds reaching peak speeds of 84 miles per hour (135 km/h). It is quite likely that she capsized. Her top-heavy superstructure and the nature of her cargo – which may not have been properly secured – would have ensured that the *Cyclops* sank very quickly indeed.

The Japanese freighter *Raifuku Maru* is said to have vanished in 1925 after sending a strange radio message: 'Danger like dagger now. Come quick!' The message, picked up by the White Star liner *Homeric* but distorted by electrical interference, was in fact 'Now very danger. Come quick!' The *Homeric* sped to the freighter's assistance but encountered mountainous seas and saw the *Raifuku Maru* sink with all hands.

The Triangle writers say that the 355-foot (106-metre) freighter *Sandra* and her crew of 28 sailed into oblivion in calm seas and under blue skies in June 1950. About the only details they get correct are the freighter's name and nationality. The *Sandra* was 185 feet (55 metres) long, carried a crew of 11 and vanished in hurricane force winds in April 1950.

Hurricanes and storms also prevailed when the freighter *Anglo-Australian* vanished in 1938, when the yacht *Connemara IV* was abandoned in 1955, and when the *Revonoc* and its owner Harvey Conover disappeared in 1958. Similar explanations are available for the bulk of Triangle disappearances. Although it is impossible to say for certain that the *Revonoc*, for example, was engulfed by a storm, storms are known to have been responsible for maritime disasters, and the presence of a storm enables us to assume a rational explanation. At which point it is worth remembering Charles

Berlitz's own words: 'When the fate of a ship is established, or even assumed, the mystery ceases.'

The cornerstone of the Triangle myth is the disappearance of five US Navy bombers – Flight 19 – and a sea plane, all on 5 December 1945, and this will be the subject of a future article. Among other aircraft to have vanished in the Bermuda Triangle were the British airliner *Star Tiger* and a Douglas DC-3, both in 1948.

The *Star Tiger*, a Tudor IV aircraft, mysteriously vanished towards the end of a flight from the Azores to Bermuda on 30 January of that year. Contrary to the Triangle legend, the last message from it was an acknowledgement of a radio bearing requested several minutes earlier and not 'Weather and performance excellent. Expect to arrive on schedule.' The weather, in fact, was anything but excellent. Cloud cover throughout the flight had prevented accurate navigation; and the aircraft had battled severe headwinds, forcing the pilot to revise

Hurricanes and storms provide likely reasons for some of the losses in the Bermuda Triangle. The *Connemara IV* (above) was found drifting and abandoned in September 1955 off Bermuda. The crew were probably lost overboard when the yacht was caught in a hurricane. The racing yawl *Revonoc* (right) vanished between Key West and Miami in early 1958 when the Florida coast was being battered by near-hurricane-force winds

Below: A Douglas DC-3 of the type that vanished in December 1948



his estimated time of arrival and reducing the safety margin of extra fuel. The airliner disappeared at the most critical stage of her flight. She had insufficient fuel to reach any airport other than Bermuda and was forced to fly at 2000 feet (600 metres) because of the headwinds. Had anything gone wrong such as fuel exhaustion, complete electrical failure or engine breakdown the *Star Tiger* would have plummeted into the sea within seconds.

Omissions and distortions

The case of the Douglas DC-3 lost on 28 December 1948 is an example of how facts have been omitted and distorted to imply a greater mystery than exists. The aircraft, carrying 27 passengers, had left San Juan, Puerto Rico, bound for Miami, Florida. The pilot, Captain Robert Linquist, is said to have radioed that he was 50 miles (80 kilometres) from Miami, could see the lights of the city, and was standing by for landing instructions. Miami replied within minutes, but the aircraft had vanished. The water over which the aircraft was flying was only 20 feet (6 metres) deep, yet search craft failed to locate any wreckage.

The DC-3 is known to have had a defective radio (though some writers have failed to mention this), so the sudden silence does not mean that the aircraft was overcome immediately after sending the message to Miami. It also removes any mystery attached to the lack of a distress call. Furthermore, the pilot did not say he could see the lights of Miami. It seems that some writers have put these words in the pilot's mouth because he said that he was only 50 miles (80 kilometres) from Miami (from which distance the lights of the city would be visible).

However, the pilot had been compensating for a north-west wind, but the wind direction had changed during the flight and it is not known whether the pilot received notification of the fact. If not, he could have missed the Florida Peninsula and literally flown into the Gulf of Mexico. And although the depth of the sea over which the DC-3 was flying at the time of the last message is in places only 20 feet (6 metres) deep, in other areas it plunges to depths of up to 5000 feet (1520 metres). Nobody is certain where the aircraft went down.

Every air disaster is the subject of an exhaustive enquiry to establish the cause. These investigations rely largely on minute examination of wreckage. If there is no wreckage, it is virtually impossible to hazard a guess at what happened. Since none of the accepted causes of an air crash can positively be eliminated nobody can claim that some unknown phenomenon was alone responsible.

A few years ago it was claimed that the strange forces of the Bermuda Triangle reached into space. It was learned that a weather satellite malfunctioned over the Bermuda Triangle and *only* over the Triangle.

The *Star Tiger*, an aircraft of the Tudor IV type (below), went missing in 1948 on a flight from London to Havana via the Azores and Bermuda. The last message received from her gave no inkling of anything untoward



The disappearance of the *Star Tiger* has been called 'truly a modern mystery of the air'. A thorough search of the seas failed to find any trace of the aircraft or its passengers

In fact the satellite was not malfunctioning. The satellite collected visual and infra-red data on cloud cover and transmitted the information to Earth. For convenience the infra-red signal was transmitted direct while the visual signal was stored on a loop of tape for later transmission. At certain times the tape became full and had to be rewound, so no visual signal was transmitted. By pure coincidence the tape was rewinding when the satellite's orbit brought it over the Triangle.

Then there was the Eastern Airlines aircraft that is said to have disappeared from the radar for 10 minutes and landed at Miami, when every clock and watch aboard was found to be 10 minutes slow. The flight number and the date and time of this event are never given and there is no record of the incident with the FAA, Miami Airport or Eastern Airlines. In short, there is not a scrap of evidence that it ever happened.

On page 1338: how the mystery of the Bermuda Triangle stands up to investigation

TUDOR LOST BETWEEN AZORES AND BERMUDA

AIR-SEA RESCUE SEARCH FOR 31 ON BOARD

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

NEW YORK, Friday.

All aircraft and ships in the vicinity of Bermuda to-day joined in the search for the British South American Airways Tudor IV., *Star Tiger*, which is overdue at Bermuda from the Azores.

The search was fully maintained until darkness fell, when the United States Navy recalled all its planes. American Army Flying Fortresses and Super-Fortresses, however, continued their quest during the night, assisted by two British South American Airways machines.

SEARCH PLANE CRASHES: NINE DEAD IN ALPS

The *Star Tiger* left London on Tuesday, but was held up by bad weather in the Azores. It was due at Kindley Field, Bermuda, at 5 a.m. G.M.T. to-day.

According to New York Coast-guard H.Q. the *Star Tiger* was 380 miles north-east of Bermuda when its last radio message was received at 3 a.m. The pilot reported nothing unusual.

The plane, which had a crew of

LOST DAKOTA SEEN

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

PARIS, Friday.

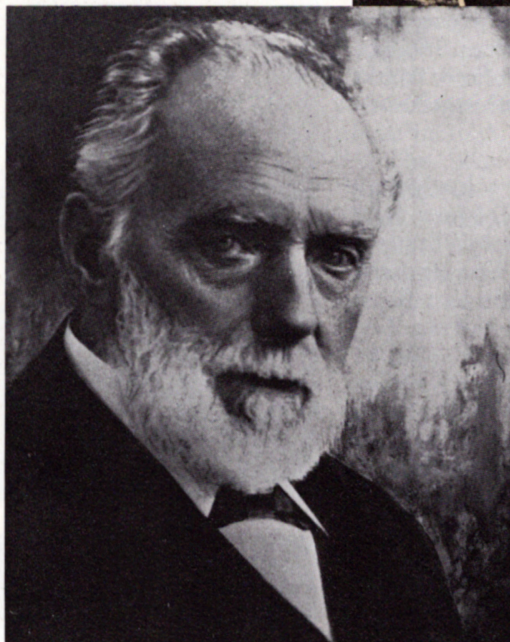
While searching for the American Dakota which crashed in the

The story of medium Robert James Lees and his 'vision' of Jack the Ripper seems, on the surface, a perfect example of impeccable psychic sleuthing. But, asks MELVIN HARRIS, how reliable is that story?

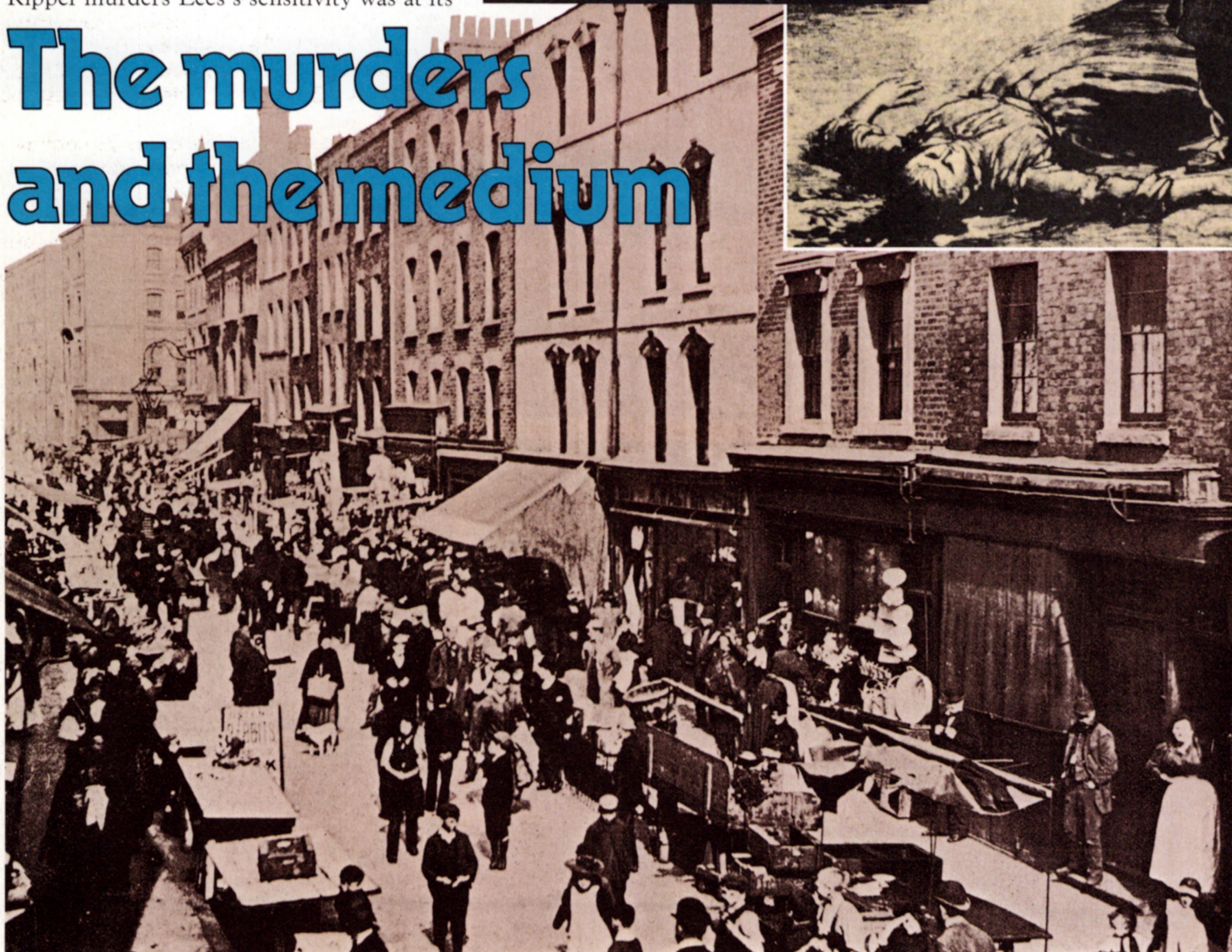
THE MURDEROUS EXPLOITS of Jack the Ripper in the East End of Victorian London excited the avid interest of many mediums and clairvoyants who claimed that their psychic powers enabled them to determine when and where the Ripper would commit his next foul deed. It has even been claimed that the case was eventually solved by the timely intervention of a gifted medium – Robert James Lees (1848–1931).

This claim rests on a document that, according to the *Daily Express*, was 'dictated by the medium', and released after his death in 1931. Its validity is strengthened by the further claim that his story has never been contradicted by the police.

According to the Spiritualist movement, Robert Lees developed his psychic powers during boyhood, and they were so outstanding that Queen Victoria consulted him when he was a mere 13 years old. Other royal consultations followed. By the time of the Ripper murders Lees's sensitivity was at its



The murders and the medium





Above left: the medium Robert James Lees (1848–1931), who is said to have had precognitive visions of Jack the Ripper's murders

Above: a contemporary newspaper sketch showing the discovery of one of Jack the Ripper's victims. The murders created enormous public interest – and still fascinate researchers today

Left: Brick Lane, Whitechapel, in the East End of London, at the time of the Ripper murders. One of his mutilated victims was discovered in an alley off this thoroughfare

Right: alley leading to Durward Street – formerly Buck's Row – where the Ripper killed Polly Nichols on 31 August 1888

peak and it led unexpectedly to a loathsome clairvoyant experience.

Lees's posthumous statement records that, shortly after the third Whitechapel murder, while writing in his study, he became convinced that the Ripper was about to strike again. He had a vision of an East End location – a narrow court with a gin palace nearby. He could see the name of the court clearly, he could even see that the clock on the wall of the gin palace stood at 12.40 a.m. A man and a woman entered a dark corner of the court. The man was cold sober, the woman the worse for drink. In her drunken state she leaned against the wall for support and the man quickly closed her mouth with his hand, drew a knife and slit her throat. Then he let her drop to the ground, stabbed her repeatedly, coolly wiped the blade on her dress and walked off into the night.

All this was seen in full harrowing detail. Shaken, Robert Lees hurried to Scotland Yard to warn the police, but he was treated as a harmless lunatic – though to humour him the duty officer wrote down the time and place of the 'forthcoming murder'.

The following night, the Ripper slew a prostitute in the very manner, at the very time, and in the very court named by Lees.

The news of this murder greatly disturbed Lees and he found himself unable to sleep at night. His health suffered so much that his doctor advised a holiday abroad, so Lees moved for a while to the Continent. During that period, the Ripper murdered four more women – but Lees was untroubled by visions and he returned home renewed in health.

A vision of the victim

About one year later Lees had another premonition. This time the vision was far less clear than his first, but he was able to see the murdered woman's face. He also noted the peculiarity of the mutilations – one ear was completely severed, the other was left clinging to the face by a mere strand of flesh.

On recovering from the trauma of this trance, Lees visited Scotland Yard again. There he insisted on seeing the chief inspector of police and poured out the story to him. This time his tale was received with awe, and from his desk the inspector drew out a shabby postcard and handed it to Lees. It was written in red ink and adorned with two bloody fingerprints. It read:

Tomorrow night I shall again take my revenge, claiming, from a class of women who have made themselves most obnoxious to me, my ninth victim.

JACK THE RIPPER

P.S. To prove that I am really Jack the Ripper I will cut off the ears of this ninth victim.

The inspector now looked on Lees's story as a warning sent from heaven, since no one but himself knew of the postcard message. Extra police were drafted into Whitechapel and by

the next day the alleys and courts of the area were swarming with plainclothes men. But, despite these precautions, the Ripper struck again. As in the vision, he left his victim with one ear severed and the other hanging.

Robert Lees suffered a further breakdown in health and left London for the Continent once more. While he was abroad, the Ripper killed his sixteenth prostitute and informed Scotland Yard that he would go on until he reached a score of 20.

A grim tally

Shortly afterwards the medium returned to London and dined at the Criterion restaurant in Piccadilly with two Americans. Half-way through the meal Lees cried out: 'Great God! Jack the Ripper has committed another murder.' They checked the time – it was 7.49 p.m. – then all three went post-haste to Scotland Yard.

The police there knew nothing of any such murder but, before Lees had finished dictating his statement, a telegram arrived stating that a body had been found in Crown Court. The time of discovery was given as 8.10 p.m.

At once an inspector drove to Crown Court with the medium. On arriving, Lees pointed to a dark corner and said, 'Look in the angle of the wall. There is something written there.' The inspector ran forward, struck a match and saw that chalked on the wall were the words 'Seventeen, Jack the Ripper.'

The inspector needed no more convincing. According to Lees's posthumous document, he now seemed to see the medium as 'an instrument of Providence' and he became determined to make use of his 'marvellous



Ripper murders

though incomprehensible powers'. Lees 'consented to try to track the Ripper much in the same way as a bloodhound pursues a criminal. There seemed to be some magnetic wave connecting him . . . with the fugitive.'

All that night Lees allowed that strange 'magnetic' influence to guide him. He moved swiftly through the London streets, followed by the inspector and his detectives. At last, at 4 a.m., Lees stopped. He pointed to the gates of a West End mansion and gasped, 'There is your murderer – the man you are looking for.'

The Ripper at home

The inspector was dismayed for he recognised the house as the residence of one of the most celebrated society physicians. It was unthinkable to link such a distinguished man with the East End slaughter. But the medium insisted that the Ripper was inside. Lees's insistence made the inspector waver and he set the medium a new task. 'Describe to me the interior of the doctor's hall and I will arrest him, but I shall do so at the risk of losing my position.' Without hesitation Lees said, 'The hall has a high porter's chair of black oak on the right hand as you enter it, a stained glass window at the extreme end, and a large mastiff is at this moment asleep at the foot of the stairs.'

The police waited until the servants rose at 7 a.m., then they rang the door-bell. The door opened to reveal a hall exactly as described by Lees, except for one thing – there was no dog in sight. But, as the servants explained, there was a mastiff in the house and it did sleep at the foot of the stairs, but every morning it was let out into the garden as soon as they rose.

'This is the hand of God,' whispered the



inspector and he asked for the doctor's wife to be called. She poured out an incredible story. Her husband was a dual personality: to the outside world he was always a kindly and sympathetic man, yet she knew that at times he became a brutal and uncontrollable sadist. Occasionally she had even locked herself and the children into a bedroom to escape his vicious side. Then came the most horrible part of all. The Ripper murders began and she 'noticed with heart-breaking dread that whenever a Whitechapel murder had occurred her husband was absent from home'.

After hearing the wife's account the inspector called in two experts on insanity and the doctor was sent for. When confronted the doctor admitted that his mind had been unbalanced for some years and there were times when he had complete lapses of memory. Once he had found his shirt-front soaked with blood, but he attributed this to a nosebleed during one of his stupors.

A search of the house brought proof that the Ripper had been found at last and the doctor's 'respectable' personality was overcome by horror and remorse. He begged to be killed at once, since he 'could not live under the same roof as a monster'. But this was never seriously considered. Instead, 12 doctors were summoned to constitute a Commission in Lunacy – the Ripper was declared insane and all parties to the proceedings were sworn to secrecy.

The mad doctor was promptly removed to a private asylum for the insane in Islington, north London, where he was lodged under an assumed name. But in order to account for the doctor's disappearance a sham death and burial was arranged – and the public was convincingly duped. Even the asylum keepers and inspectors never dreamed that they had custody of the infamous Jack the Ripper. To them, he was simply inmate number 124 – until the day he died.

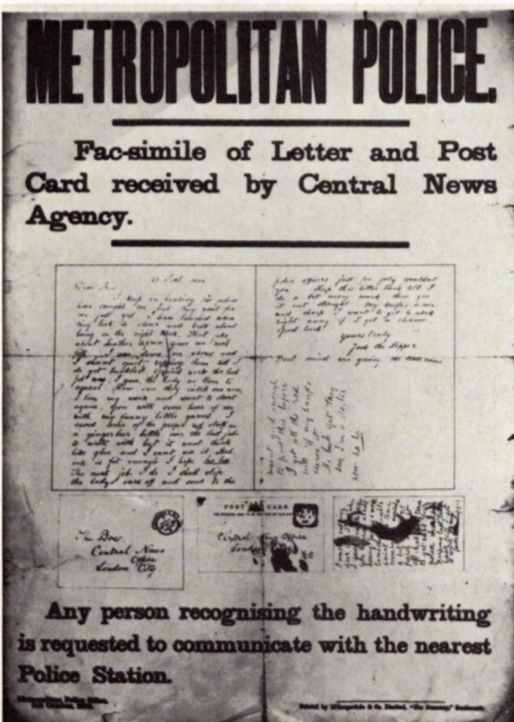
This detailed and elaborate account gained a massive circulation when it was



Above: the Duke of Clarence (left) with his father, the Prince of Wales (right) and the rest of his family.

Clarence has been cited by more than one writer as a central character in the Ripper story, if not the murderer himself. Certainly his death in 1892 – allegedly from natural causes – conveniently rid the Royal Family of the greatest threat to their reputation

Left: Scotland Yard's search for Jack the Ripper included an unprecedented poster campaign, which used postcards said to be addressed to the police by the Ripper

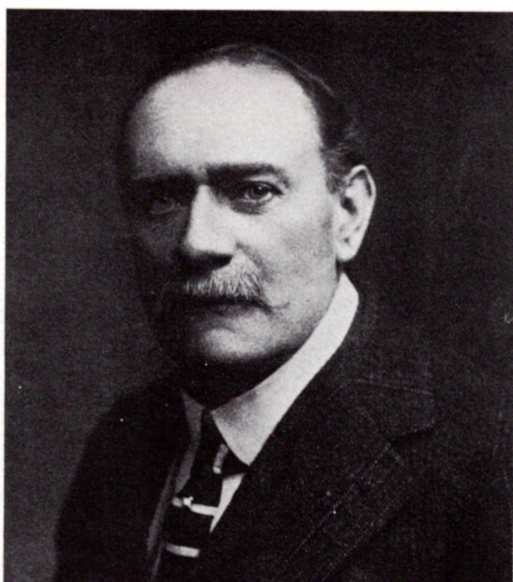


Left: formerly 'The Ten Bells', this East End pub was the haunt of some of the Ripper's victims

Right: Sir Melville Macnaghten, head of CID at Scotland Yard during the time of the Ripper murders

Below right: Miller Court, where Jack the Ripper butchered his last victim, Marie Kelly

Bottom: Hereward Carrington, the American psychical researcher who was inclined to treat seriously the *Daily Express* story of Lees and the Ripper



published in the *Daily Express* in March 1931. From then on it was repeated in newspapers, magazines and books throughout the world. Its very wealth of detail made it look authentic. It was treated seriously by investigators of standing, such as Hereward Carrington and Dr Nandor Fodor. And leading Spiritualist editor Maurice Barbanell often retold it and never had any doubts about its accuracy. Yet, for all that, this story is completely untenable. There is no possible way of matching it up with the real facts of the murders and their subsequent investigation.

Too many murders

To begin with there were not 17 murders – but five. It is true that some earlier and later murders were at times confused with the Ripper's – but that was solely due to a circulation-hungry press and a sensation-seeking public. Sir Melville Macnaghten, head of CID at Scotland Yard, was adamant that 'The Whitechapel Murderer had five victims and five victims only.'

Then the murders were not spread over a period of years, as in the document, but took place over a period of a mere 10 weeks – beginning on 31 August 1888 and ending on 9 November.

Police records show that none of the murders took place at the times quoted and no murder took place at Crown Court. And no postcard was ever received bearing the quoted message. There *was* a postcard written in red ink with red smudges, but this was posted in London on 1 October *after* the double murders of 29 September, and after details of these murders had become public knowledge. The writer of this card and of a previous letter was, in fact, the first to use the name 'Jack the Ripper'. It was believed to have been the work of some sensationalist reporter.

Lastly, the police *have* denied that Lees was involved with the Ripper hunt. In fact,

Robert Lees's own diary entries contradict this part of the tale. They show that he did not approach the police until 2 October 1888 – three days after the murders of the 29th.

And remember, at this late stage there was only one more murder to come – that of Mary Kelly. This last killing took place not at 7.49 p.m. in the open, at Crown Court, but in the early hours of the morning, in a sordid room in Miller's Court off Dorset Street.

In that case, what prompted Lees to dictate his absurd statement? The answer is simple: there was no statement! That claim can now be shown up merely as a journalistic device used to sell the story. The truth is that the *Daily Express* report of 1931 turns out to be nothing more than a slightly modified reprint of an article that first appeared in the *Sunday Times-Herald* of Chicago as long ago as 28 April 1895.

The Chicago piece was 'inspired' by the alleged remarks of 'Dr Howard, a well-known London physician . . . who sat on the commission in lunacy.' Despite this, it was simply a few facts coloured by fiction.

What remains true, however, is that Lees did independently state that he himself had cornered the murderer. But others made similar claims. Robert Clifford Spicer for one claimed that *he* had arrested the Ripper; while Dr Lyttleton Stewart Forbes asserted that it was his actions alone that had brought the murders to a halt. Those killings bred a good many illusions and delusions. And in the case of Robert Lees there is not a scrap of proof to show that his firm belief was anything more than one such cherished delusion.

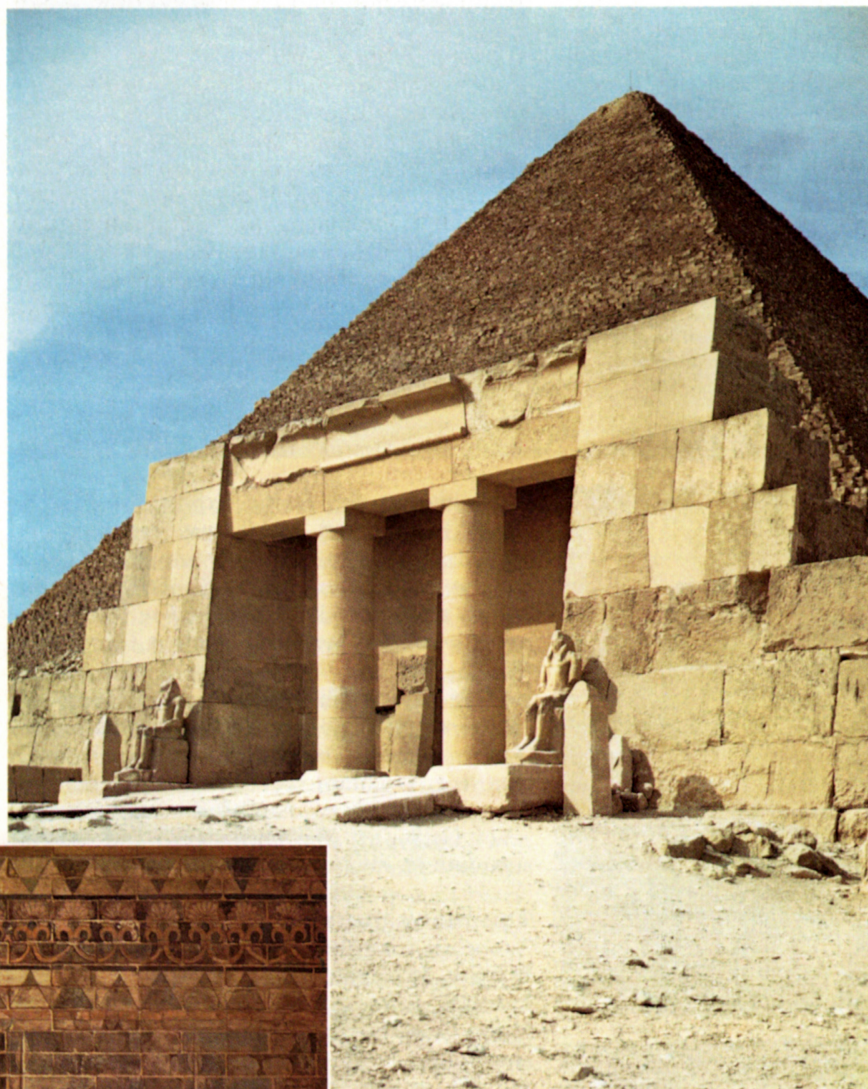
How right were the psychics who 'saw' the Yorkshire Ripper? See page 1334



No time like the present

Those who believe that space-beings visited Earth centuries ago point to wonders of the ancient world as evidence of extra-terrestrial achievement. But, as PETER JAMES asks, were ancient peoples really incapable of such accomplishments?

WHILE MOST ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK is concerned with the mundane bric-a-brac and rubbish left by ancient societies, every now and again an object turns up that completely surpasses all previous estimates of an ancient culture's technical skill. During the 1970s archaeologists working in Bulgaria made an extraordinary series of discoveries about the Neolithic Karanovo culture that flourished there around 4500 BC. The finds date from a time when Man is generally thought to have had little or no knowledge of metallurgy – yet the Karanovo graves revealed a surprising treasure-trove of beautiful finely made gold and copper jewellery and weapons. Finds such as these are slowly, but continually, forcing archaeologists to reassess their views of ancient Man's technological abilities.



Egypt has produced more scientific wonders, often of great antiquity, than any other region. The ancient Egyptians had an advanced knowledge of medicine and surgery. They knew sufficient to use contraceptives of honey and acacia gum (an effective spermicide), and it has even been suggested that they understood the use of penicillin. A model wooden glider of around 200 BC from Saqqâra shows at least a basic grasp of the principles of aerodynamics (see page 701). And the Great Pyramid, built around 2600 BC, amazes even 20th-century Man with its sheer size and architectural perfection (see page 842).

Many writers have insisted that the Great Pyramid of Cheops at Gîza could not be built even with present-day scientific skill and machinery. Erich von Däniken, for one, stated bluntly in *Chariots of the gods?*: 'Today, in the twentieth century, no architect could build a copy of the Pyramid of Cheops, even if the technical resources of

Left: the façade of the tomb of Sneferu, with the Great Pyramid of Cheops behind. Erich von Däniken gives the weight of the pyramid as more than 31 million tonnes and says it would have taken ordinary mortals 664 years to build. In fact the pyramid weighs about 6 million tonnes, and engineers and archaeologists estimate that it could have been erected well within the 23-year reign of its builder, Cheops

Below left: a Persian frieze showing archers, dating from the sixth century BC. Many technological secrets of ancient glazing were 'lost' during the Dark Ages and were rediscovered in western Europe only during the industrial revolution

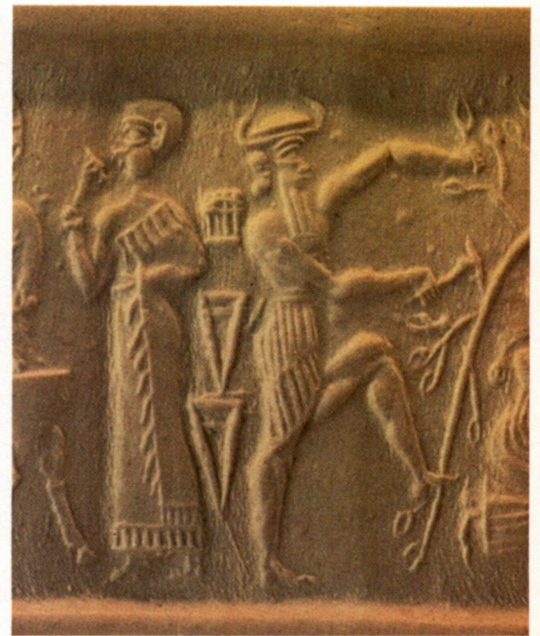
Were the gods worshipped by ancient Man really interplanetary visitors? Marduk, god of agriculture, is shown on a seal (right) from Mesopotamia, dating from the third century BC. The head of an idol (below) is from Bulgaria, where a very advanced culture existed as long ago as the fifth century BC

every continent were at his disposal.' The implication of such a claim is obvious: if *we* couldn't build it, how could the ancient Egyptians have done so with their basic technology and simple tools? Did the Egyptians have 'outside help', from extra-terrestrial intelligence?

Von Däniken and other supporters of the 'ancient astronaut' theory draw similar conclusions for many of the architectural wonders of the ancient world. Another puzzling structure often cited is the huge stone complex of Tiahuanaco, near Lake Titicaca in the Andes of Bolivia (see page 828). Added to these architectural feats is an increasing list of technological 'ancient anomalies', many of which have been discussed in the pages of *The Unexplained*. Taken together, the file suggests that much of the advanced knowledge we proudly believe is peculiar to our modern world may have been available hundreds, even thousands, of years ago – including sophisticated metallurgy, surgical operations, the use of electricity and the idea of heavier-than-air flight. If we also take into account the myths of the 'gods' who taught Man the arts and sciences, then the case for extra-terrestrial intervention in Man's early history almost begins to look plausible.

But is the extra-terrestrial hypothesis really a fair explanation of ancient technological 'anomalies'? Unfortunately, writers like von Däniken too often exaggerate and distort the evidence. And in order to show that extra-terrestrial help was needed, von Däniken has to attempt to discredit the Egyptians by implying that they had none of the basic resources necessary for such a massive undertaking as the construction of the Great Pyramid.

Almost every stage of von Däniken's argument relies on a misinterpretation of the facts, and the clear evidence that the Egyptians themselves were responsible for the



Great Pyramid is ignored or brushed aside. The fact is that the name of Pharaoh Cheops (or Khufu), remembered by the later Egyptians as the cruel taskmaster who had ordered the building of the Great Pyramid, is carved on some of its limestone blocks. The structure *is* an extraordinary achievement, but the Egyptians were, without doubt, masters of mathematics, architecture, stone-masonry and, above all, organisation. The dozens of other pyramids dotted along the Nile Valley, ranging from a few feet high to little short of the Great Pyramid's 450 feet (137 metres), stand as witnesses to the fact that Egyptians could have built Cheops's pyramid.

A false impression

Cheops's Great Pyramid and other 'ancient anomalies' can only be made into extra-terrestrial artefacts at the expense of ancient peoples. By creaming off their greatest achievements as 'proof' of extra-terrestrial intervention, von Däniken creates a false impression that is downright insulting to highly sophisticated ancient cultures like those of the Egyptians, Mayans, Hindus and Babylonians. Carl Sagan summed up: 'Essentially, von Däniken's argument is that our ancestors were too stupid to create the most impressive surviving architectural and artistic works.'

Archaeological evidence, often just shards and fragments, is far too limited to reconstruct the real scope of ancient peoples' skill and knowledge. We would not like to be assessed by soft-drink bottles, which will far outlast the paper on which are described our educational systems, the thoughts of our philosophers and saints, our medical knowledge and the mathematics and scientific skills that have flown us to the nearest planets. Nor would we like to think that an archaeologist of the future would ascribe the remains of a fragmentary radio, preserved by



Ancient astronauts

chance conditions, to an alien intelligence. Yet this is how von Däniken treats the evidence that indicates ancient Man may have used surprisingly advanced technology.

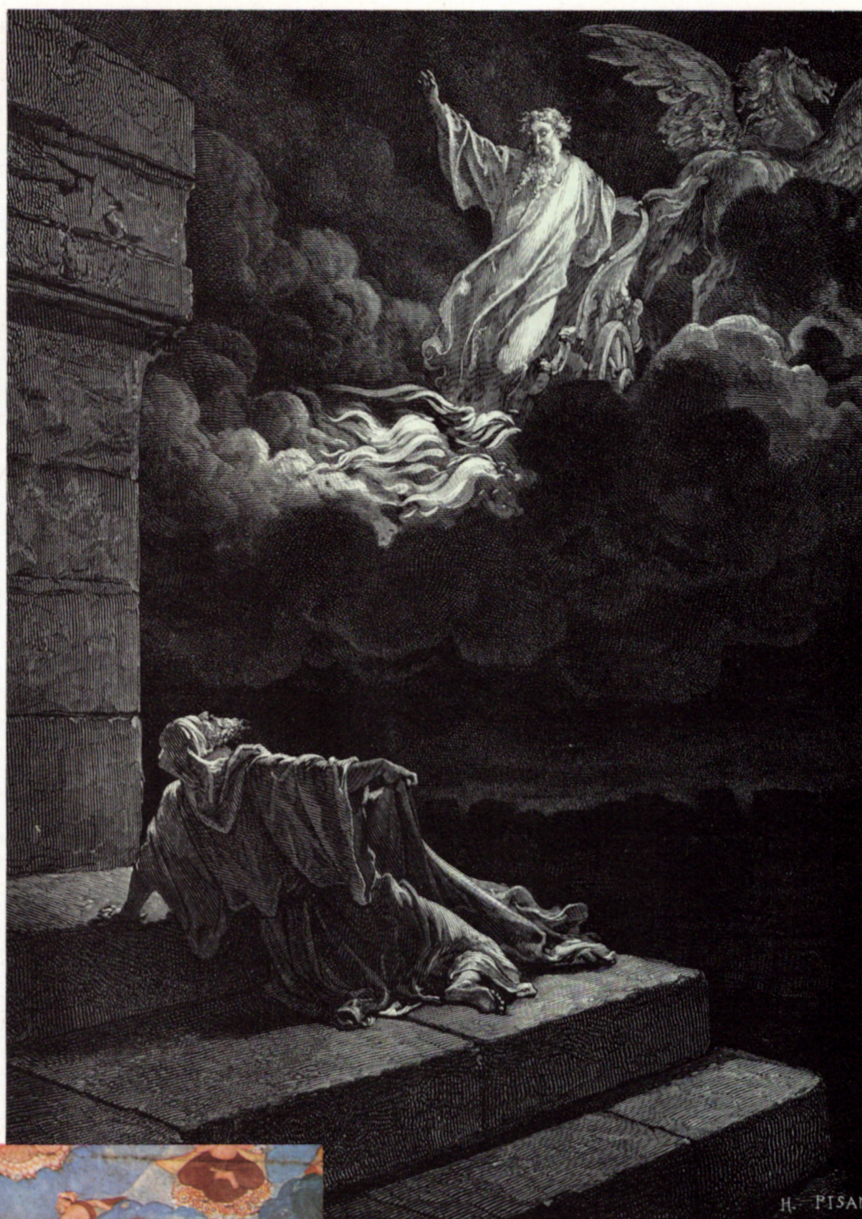
The ancient astronaut theorists, while professing to be free-thinking and far-sighted, are actually the victims of a very narrow view of history that sees our own era as the most important point in time, a focus by which all other historical periods must be evaluated. Books like *Chariots of the gods?* ooze enthusiasm for the scientific know-how of the space age. Von Däniken wrote his first books for a public fully charged with excitement by the Apollo space probes, which culminated in the first manned landing on the Moon in 1969 – the proof that interplanetary travel was possible. For von Däniken, Man's history is seen solely in terms of a development from 'primitive' ancestors to the present stage of space-age technology. He zealously seeks spacesuits, goggles, lunar modules and the other trappings of space-age technology in ancient art – as if beings capable of crossing the vast distances of interstellar space would be using anything like the crude equipment we use to reach the Moon! Many skills and techniques that once flourished are now forgotten, and many discoveries are simply rediscoveries of knowledge that has faded away or been obliterated by man-made and natural destruction. We should avoid the all too easy mistake of thinking that the scientists of the modern world are the only kind of people capable of advanced technological feats.

The ancient astronaut school's interpretation of mythology fails because of this narrow view of history. It compares myths of flying chariots and helpful gods from heaven

Above right: 'Behold, there appeared a chariot of fire . . . and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.' The fiery chariot is not meant to be taken literally. In the story of Elijah it provides a graphic means of describing death

Right: Krishna, on the bird-god Garuda, fights Indra, seated on an elephant. In Hindu legend, Krishna performed miracles, subdued Indra and slew Kamsa, usurper of the throne of Mathura. For 'ancient astronaut' theorists, such legends indicate that extra-terrestrial beings visited Earth long ago

Far right: part of the famous Inca fortress at Sacahuaman, Peru, which testifies to ancient Man's technical skills



with the 20th-century concepts of space flight and extra-terrestrial intelligences. We are asked to leap back in time with the image of the modern astronaut into the world of the Greek and Egyptian gods. But what about the centuries in between? Did the 'space gods' suddenly disappear from Man's mythology? A fact ignored by von Däniken is that they did not. All the motifs in the 'legends of the sons of God' that are used to argue the case for extra-terrestrial intervention in ancient times continue to be found much later, not only in the stories collected by anthropologists, but in the extensive fairy-lore of medieval and post-medieval Europe. They include the appearance of supernatural deities in mysterious flying craft, the abduction of mortals to remote worlds, and the superior knowledge of the strange visitors, usually benign, who teach selected mortals new skills and arts.

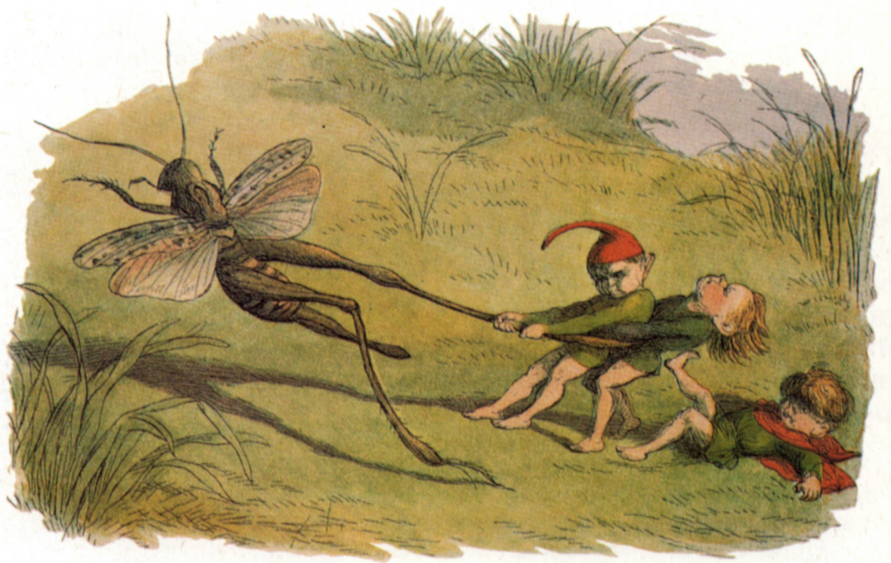
A legend often cited by the ancient astronaut lobby is the North American Indian

tale of the adventures of Algon or Wampee:

Wampee was hunting one day when he came across a circular depression on a clearing of rich grass. Hearing the strains of distant music he looked up and saw a speck in the sky; the speck drew nearer and nearer, and proved to be a basket, which came to ground on the circle marked on the grass. From it stepped twelve beautiful maidens. When they began to dance, Wampee, overcome with passion, ran into the clearing, but when they saw him they resumed their song and the basket carried them off into the sky. Wampee returned to the clearing frequently, and one day he managed to capture one of the maidens, making her his wife. She bore him a son, but missing her own kind she built a circular basket and flew away from the earth with her son, never to be seen again.

Is this myth really a memory of an ancient extra-terrestrial contact, when it is such a close parallel to the tales of meetings with 'elfin' people still reported until this century in the remoter corners of the British Isles? And the resemblance to some of the more bizarre UFO stories of today is striking.

In fact, a comparison of the myths that supposedly describe extra-terrestrial visitations, medieval and modern fairy-lore, and the more exotic UFO contact stories, shows that they are certainly part and parcel of the same phenomenon. (John Michell has amply demonstrated this point in *The flying saucer vision*.) There are many people alive today who claim to have 'seen' the fairy world or to have flown in a flying saucer. While they probably had *some* kind of experience, no one would take their stories literally. Yet von Däniken takes at face value an ancient myth about a romance between a mortal and a god and offers it as 'evidence' that aliens have



Above: a 19th-century illustration of elfin cruelty. In the realm of the imagination anything is possible – and folklore includes many stories that are similar to modern-day UFO sightings

Further reading

Erich von Däniken, *Chariots of the gods?*, Corgi 1971
T.C. Lethbridge, *The legend of the sons of God*, Routledge 1972
John Michell, *The flying saucer vision*, Abacus 1974
Ronald Story, *The space gods revealed*, New English Library 1976
Ronald Story, *Guardians of the Universe?*, New English Library 1980

genetically manipulated Man's evolution. While he mentions UFO sightings, von Däniken ignores the bizarre UFO contact stories and the medieval fairy-lore. Yet the myths of 'space gods' that he uses as main evidence have the appearance of ancient UFO contact stories. The medieval fairy-lore is a vital 'missing link' that bridges the gap between the two kinds of story. The 'little green men' of modern UFO mythology are unmistakably the green-clad elves of Celtic folklore.

A product of the mind?

For many years it was standard to view the UFO phenomenon simply in terms of extra-terrestrial craft, an interpretation now on the wane. While many UFO sightings may be of 'hardware' of some sort, this theory does not explain the contact stories, a phenomenon that is at least half in the mind. Just as von Däniken sees ancient art in terms of space-suits and lunar modules, so the observer of a 'UFO landing' seems to interpret the experience through his own cultural filter and 'see' a fiery chariot, fairy ship or spacecraft, depending on the age he lives in. There are too many such stories to doubt that the phenomenon is real, whether it belongs to an entirely psychological world or to physical realities normally out of our reach. Possibly it borrows from both, but the interpretation in terms of rocket packs or gossamer wings is certainly a subjective product of the contactee.

Trying to understand the psychology behind the whole range of stories of Man's contact with 'other beings' is a less easy, perhaps less satisfying, approach than the glib 'spaceman' theories of the ancient astronaut school. But it will tell us far more about the human mind and its attempts to come to terms with the unknown. Rather than force the ancient gods into the strait-jackets of 'ancient astronauts', we should instead use mythology and folklore to help us gain a wider perspective on modern stories of close encounters with 'extra-terrestrials'.



The lamps of Atlantis?

The continent of Atlantis was destroyed, according to legend, in a great cataclysm. ARCHIE ROY describes the disaster that overtook the gifted island race, and tells why they may have been the first to organise star patterns into the constellation figures that we know today

IT SEEMS UNLIKELY that conquest by a foreign power or devastation by an earthquake would have been sufficient to wipe out the entire Minoan culture so drastically that memory of it survived only in the form of legend. In the 1930s a new candidate for the disaster was proposed. About 75 miles (120 kilometres) north-north-east of Crete lies the island of Thera, where there was a thriving Minoan community. About the middle of the second millennium BC, the island suffered a paroxysmal volcanic eruption of exceptional ferocity. Many authorities believe that this explosion was the greatest catastrophe in the history of mankind. It is very likely that it marked the end of the Minoans.

A great earthquake can destroy every work of Man in the area affected in a matter of seconds. A very large volcanic eruption, such as those at Pompeii in AD 79, Krakatau (Krakatoa) in 1883 and Mount St Helens in 1980, can create not only powerful earthquakes but also a range of other disastrous effects. The pall of smoke, dust and choking gases can wrap the earth in a darkness 'blacker than the blackest night', vast areas around are bombarded with a murderous hail of pumice and lava – and colossal waves, or tsunamis, are raised in the seas.

The word 'tsunami' is Japanese; it is a more accurate name for one of these immense



Above: a pall of smoke, dust and toxic gases rises over Mount St Helens, Washington, USA. Its eruption in 1980 was a major disaster for the surrounding area – yet it was puny by comparison with the explosion of Thera in about 1500 BC

Below: the shattered crater of Thera rises above the Aegean. The island has been inhabited throughout history, despite constant volcanic activity

waves than 'tidal wave', for the phenomenon has nothing to do with the tides. The tsunami is generated by the energy released when massive crustal movements suddenly take place. Once created, the tsunami radiates outward from its point of origin, its speed varying according to the depth of water it traverses. In the deep Pacific a tsunami can move at up to 550 miles per hour (900 km/h); in the shallower Mediterranean a speed of 180 miles per hour (300 km/h) is possible.

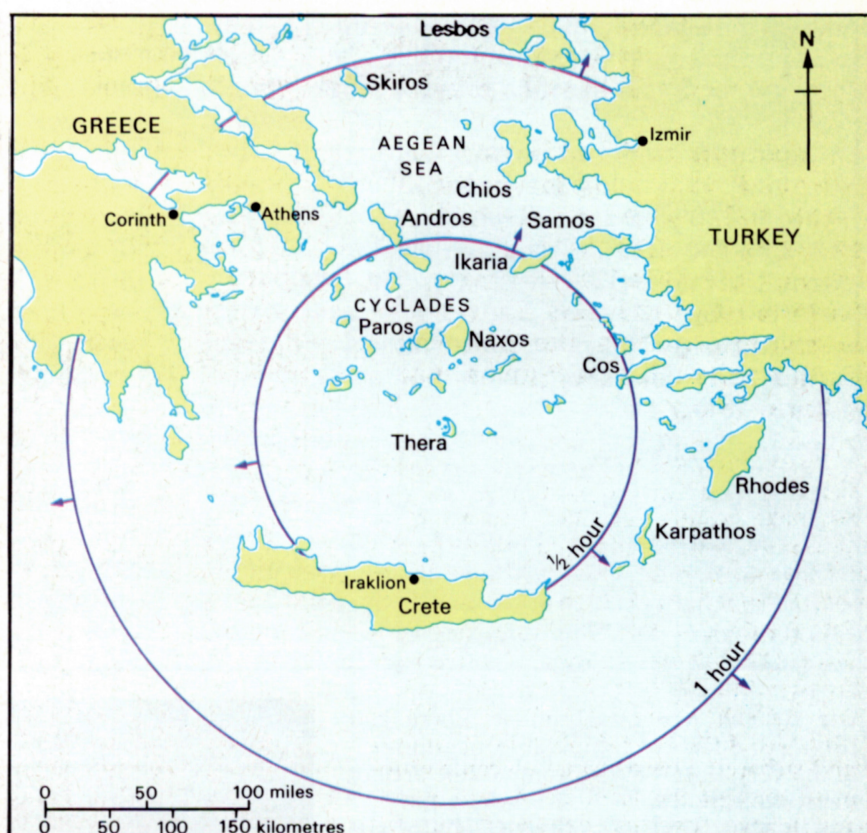
At sea, the tsunami is harmless. Ships may ride over its broad, successive waves without noticing its passing. Some vessels in the neighbourhood of the devastating Krakatau explosion did this. But as the tsunami reaches coastal waters, its speed drops as the



waters become shallower. The height of the waves increases in compensation. By the time the tsunami hits the shore it can be a giant wall of water over 650 feet (200 metres) in height, which rushes inland and destroys everything before it.

The magnitude of the Thera disaster can be estimated roughly by comparing it with the eruption at Krakatau, which is well documented. The island of Krakatau lies in the Sunda Strait, between the heavily populated islands of Java and Sumatra. The forthcoming cataclysm was heralded by volcanic activity throughout the summer of 1883. A series of earthquakes occurred, some so severe as to be felt as far away as northern Australia. By 11 August, all vegetation on Krakatau was dead. On the 26th the volcano entered its death throes. At ever shorter intervals great quantities of steam, ash, pumice and lava bombs were flung into the black, boiling clouds.

The morning of 27 August saw the brief final act of the drama. At least four tremendous explosions tore away two-thirds of the main island, an area of some 9 square miles (23 square kilometres). The northern half of Krakatau formerly rose between 330 and 1600 feet (100 and 500 metres) above sea level; now there was a huge chasm, its bottom 1000



feet (300 metres) below the surface.

Tsunamis ravaged the coasts of Sumatra and Java on 26 and 27 August. All the coastal towns and villages were destroyed, and over 36,300 people died. All ships in coastal waters or in port were sunk or stranded. A Dutch man-of-war anchored close to a pier head was carried nearly 2 miles (3 kilometres) up a river valley and deposited 30 feet (10 metres) above sea level.

As far away as Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) the waves were still 8 feet (2.5 metres) high. In the English Channel, over 15,000 miles (25,000 kilometres) away, measurable disturbances were being produced 32½ hours after the explosion.

Atmospheric shock waves circled the globe 3½ times, crossing and recrossing each other. They shattered windows and cracked

Top: the spread of ocean waves after the explosion of Thera. Within half an hour northern Crete, homeland of the Minoan civilisation, would have been inundated, with large areas of many other islands. Within an hour, coastal areas of Turkey and mainland Greece would have been severely damaged

Above: Japanese seamen battle with huge waves. The word 'tsunami' refers to an ancient enemy of the Japanese – a great tidal wave, often the result of volcanic disturbance

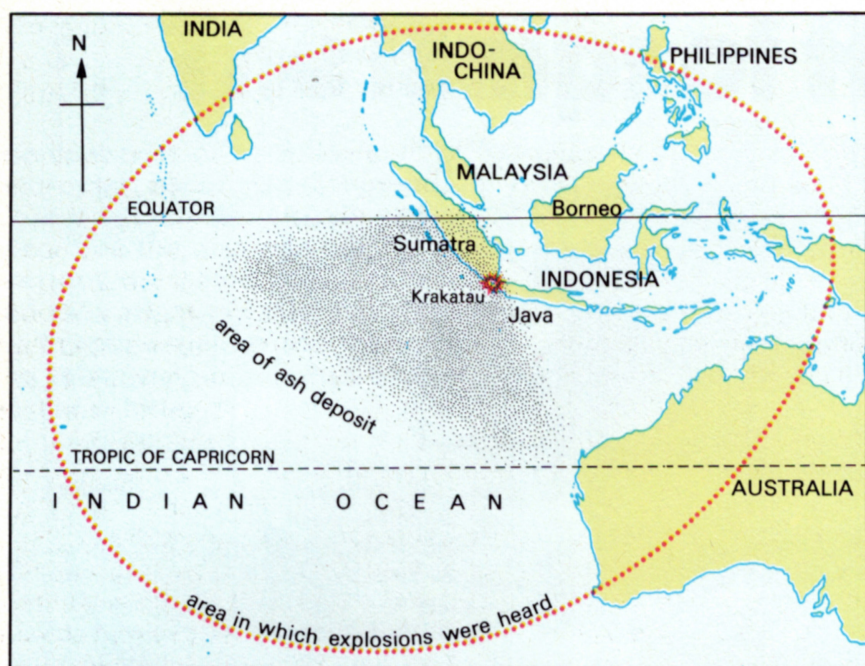
walls 90 miles (150 kilometres) away in Batavia (now Djakarta). A gas-holder was hurled from the well in which it sat. Lamps dislodged by the shocks started fires. Ash from the volcano fell over an area of 350,000 square miles (nearly a million square kilometres). For years afterwards spectacular sunsets and dawns were seen in Europe and America, a consequence of the dust lingering high in the atmosphere.

The energy of six Krakataus

The destruction of Thera must have had similar consequences – but on an even greater scale. In the past 40 years oceanographers, vulcanologists, geologists and archaeologists have put together the history of Thera and its effects on the Mediterranean world. They have been able to evaluate the relative magnitudes of the explosions by comparing the amount of crustal movement. The caldera (volcanic crater) left by the Krakatau explosion was as deep as the island had been high – 1000 feet (300 metres). The explosion had resulted in the collapse of 9 square miles (23 square kilometres) of land, 1000 feet (300 metres) thick, through a distance of 2000 feet (600 metres), releasing the energy of 100 hydrogen bombs.

When Thera exploded, an area 3½ times as great and at least 1300 feet (400 metres) thick collapsed through a distance of about 2300 feet (700 metres). The energy of nearly six Krakataus was suddenly released.

The damage caused by the explosion and collapse of Krakatau was awesome and widespread. It is reasonable to suppose that the



late Bronze Age cataclysm at Thera had produced effects of comparable magnitude – at the very least – over a comparable area of the Mediterranean.

For Crete and the other islands of the Cyclades it must have been the end of the world. In varying degrees of severity they were exposed to earth tremors, atmospheric shock waves, tsunamis, pumice fall-out and darkness that may have lasted days. The toll of villages, towns, harbours, ships and, of course, human lives must have been colossal. If the tsunamis struck during the panic produced by the claustrophobic pall of darkness, the doomed Minoans would never have known what catastrophe had struck them.

Aftermath of destruction

The theory that the Minoan civilisation was destroyed by the Thera eruption was put forward by Spyridon Marinatos in 1939. His conclusions had been inspired by his archaeological study of a villa in the Minoan port of Amnisos. Finding that the displacement of great blocks of stone could not be attributed to an earthquake but could well be the result of massive tsunamis carrying the blocks away in their backwash, he wrote: 'There is little reason to doubt that the devastation of the coast sites of Minoan Crete was caused by the waves from the eruptions of Thera.'

Beyond the area of devastation, the world learned of the catastrophe in garbled reports. Marinatos wrote:

The Egyptians must undoubtedly have learnt of an island being submerged, and this was Thera, but being so small and insignificant they did not know of it. They transferred this event to Crete, the island so grievously struck and with which they suddenly lost all contact. The repercussions of the great disaster

reverberated down the ages – taking in many lands. Legends were created and handed on – of the fabled, gifted race who once ruled the seas from their island paradise, only to be overwhelmed by terrible forces of fire, flood and earthquake unleashed by the gods; of the pall of darkness that covered the land; of floods so mountainous they swept away whole armies and cities; of plagues that struck down a despairing people; of remnants of their secret wisdom living on.

The story of a sunken continent called Atlantis was written by Plato in about 360 BC. It had been told, he said, to his ancestor Solon by the priests of Sais in Egypt. The Minoans appear in Egyptian documents as far back as the third millennium BC, and disappear suddenly before 1400 BC. There are so many correspondences between Plato's Atlantis and the history of Minoan civilisation that it is hard to believe that there is no connection between them. (See page 461.)

It is, at the least, within the bounds of



Top: the eruption of Krakatau was the most colossal explosion in recorded history. The scale of its effects gives a hint of the devastation that must have been caused by the Thera eruption, which was six times as powerful

Above: remains of Akrotiri, a seaport on Thera destroyed by the eruption

Further reading

Aratus, *Works* (tr. G.R. Mair), Heinemann 1955
J.V. Luce, *The end of Atlantis*, Paladin 1970
E.W. Maunder, *The astronomy of the Bible*, Hodder and Stoughton 1909
M.W. Ovenden, 'The origin of the constellations', *Philosophical Journal*, The Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow 1966

possibility that, apart from accounts of the great disaster given to the Egyptians by Minoan refugees fleeing from the ruin of their island, further relics may have been left. One of the celestial star globes that aided the Minoan navigators, depicting the constellations as they had been adapted from the Babylonians, may have ended up in the priestly archives along with accounts of the lost land. It would have carried its outdated astronomical information down through the centuries until Eudoxus met with it when he came seeking knowledge from the priests. If we trace the description of the constellations as given in Aratus back to the ancient Minoan people, the supreme navigators of their age, then – following the arguments of Marinatos – we are crediting that ancient body of astronomical knowledge to the people of Atlantis.

Perhaps fresh evidence, literary or archaeological, will come to light in the future. Is it too much to hope that in some Minoan house – perhaps in the seaport of Akrotiri on Thera itself – investigators will one day find, buried in the pumice, an ancient star globe that will answer our questions?

continued from back cover

produced detailed accounts of typical 'genuine' encounters entirely from imagination. Now Dr Lawson is suggesting a source for this material, one that would explain the remarkable similarities between the 'real' and 'imaginary' accounts. And that is the memory (buried in all of us according to psychiatrist Stanislav Grof) of our birth. Much 'birth trauma imagery' does resemble, closely and consistently, UFO imagery: humanoids (how often they look like the human foetus!), paralysing light beams, details of medical examinations by ufonauts, sensations of 'cosmic unity', weird noises and so on – all these classic details of contact and abduction stories can be paralleled with established birth trauma images. Why this should be the case is not entirely clear, but the distinct possibility of the connection is obviously significant for understanding the psychology of contacteeism – even if it is somewhat deflating for those whose hope of salvation lies in the coming of our 'Space Brothers'.

'A cultural phenomenon'

Historian David Jacobs held out little comfort for the nuts-and-bolts school as well, declaring that UFOs are 'a cultural phenomenon'. Whether or not there is a physical component in the UFO mystery (and the Oregon and Texas cases would testify that indeed there is), it is noticeable that UFO technology is always on the fringe of *known* technology. In other words, UFOs seem always to fit just within the range of existing knowledge, be that of airship development in 1897 or jet aircraft of the 1940s. And this would suggest that there is a large sociological as well as psychological element in the phenomenon. Either 'they' are careful not to surprise us too much, or we are in some way helping to *create* the UFO phenomenon from information to hand.

But perhaps the most interesting part of this session was the discussion of the 'crashed saucer syndrome'. Mr Jacobs bluntly suggested that crashed saucers and pickled aliens, kept in secrecy in Wright-Patterson's famed (but probably non-existent) Hangar 18, were bunkum. How, he asked, could such a world-shattering fact be kept secret for so long? The sheer numbers of people that would have to be involved in researching the craft and its occupants would eventually spring a leak in the security – and the mere rumours we hear do not amount to anything like a leak. The reaction of the assembled luminaries of ufology was, to say the least, fascinating, as some evinced a distinctly ill-disguised hostility to the dismantling of one of the hoariest UFO myths. This was surprising, in normally dispassionate investigators, and does leave one asking whether, if UFOs did not exist, we would not need to invent them. Or indeed if (as David Jacobs constantly teetered on the edge of saying)

we hadn't already invented them. The real question then is *why* – and unfortunately the session ran out of time before it could address that most intriguing of ideas.

Crashed saucers came up again in a conversation we had between sessions with author Jim McCampbell of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) – who, it turned out, had a rather different view of the matter. And a creepy one it was too. Mr McCampbell calmly remarked that he believed that there was substance to the crashed saucer stories, and that indeed the US government had made contact with aliens. Not only that, but an exchange of scientific information was being made and that the head of one government research team *was himself an extra-terrestrial*. Who is behind the cover-up, though, enquired someone. Is it a conspiracy of the military-industrial complex? No, Jim McCampbell didn't think so. It was more likely to be the international banking community. Those present should be congratulated on their self-restraint at this revelation, if only because it bears a chilling resemblance to one of the nastiest of UFO conspiracy theories. According to this, UFOs and in particular the men in black are agents of an international Jewish plot to dominate the world. People entertaining views like this have, in the past, had reason to regret them. Mr McCampbell did not exactly improve his credibility on being pursued for evidence of his unusual views, as he declined to offer any 'for security reasons'. Enough said?

Meanwhile, back at the conference, a long debate on electromagnetic effects and vehicle interference was in progress, though it overlapped with other papers. However, along with some of the other material reported here, we hope to publish Mark Rodeghier's reassessment of the phenomenon – for which, he believes, there may be a natural explanation. And so ended what ought to be a model for gatherings of this kind – one that left us with considerable admiration for the dedication of American ufologists and their tireless pursuit of the most complex of unexplained phenomena. Of course there were tedious interludes: Ron Westrum's inconclusive account of the 'sociology' of UFO witnesses, and Bertil Kuhlemann's stunningly soporific proposals for something called Project URD. Politely applauded and politely forgotten, this appears to be a means of turning ufology into a monstrous bureaucracy. But those were exceptions. CUFOS deserves congratulation.

Proceedings of the 1981 CUFOS conference are available from CUFOS, PO Box 1402, Evanston, Illinois 60204, USA.

UFOs in Chicago

At the end of September 1981, the Center for UFO Studies held its first international conference in five years. THE UNEXPLAINED flew to Chicago to follow the proceedings, and found a highly professional community of scientific investigators – with some startling stories to tell

If the CUFOS conference in Chicago achieved some kind of record in discussing UFOs for two and a half days without attracting a single crank, there was no lack of extraordinary cases for the assembled company to wonder at. But they were considered soberly, calmly, and with one overriding interest – to find some kind of scientific explanation for the UFO mystery. A remarkable number of investigative skills were present, from acoustic analysis and radio engineering to sociology and theology; and that is a fair indication of the range of problems that are thrown up by the UFO phenomenon.

The first paper of the conference was one of the most intriguing. Presented by Dr J. Allen Hynek and Mr Howard Schechter, it featured a rare piece of evidence – a tape recording of an unusual sound apparently emitted by a UFO sighted in St Helens, Oregon. The story: citizens' band radio enthusiast Don Atkins, living on the Washington side of the Columbia River, had a call at 4 a.m. on 17 March 1981 from a police patrol on the Oregon side of the river: 'Do you see that light I see in your direction, or am I crazy?'

Atkins went to his window and peered out. High above the house was an intense white light – but this was not the light the patrolmen could see. They had to drive to higher ground to catch sight of this second light. It glided across the river, making a high-pitched screaming whine as it went. Atkins at this point thrust his radio mike out of the window so that the officers could hear it – and, fortunately, they were recording the conversation on a cassette in their car.

During the half hour or so that this light remained in view (changing colour to orange meanwhile) the first light spotted by the police officers remained stationary. Oregon State Police officers also saw the light and checked to find if Portland International Airport had a radar reading. The airport said they had – and then, five minutes later, denied that they had ever had an object on their screens! By now other CBers had joined in, having heard the conversation and spotted the lights. Despite the many witnesses – and the recorded evidence – no official agency has broken silence about this bizarre affair.

Dr Hynek managed to obtain a copy of the police

tape recording, and it was analysed by acoustics expert Howard Schechter – with baffling results after hundreds of comparative tests. The sound corresponds to no known engine or material – though this may be, in part, the effect of the technical characteristics of the CB equipment. And there is the faint possibility of a massive hoax. But apart from the enormous amount of equipment required, why do it? And at 4 a.m., in Oregon?

Attacked in Texas

Even more startling was the case, reported by Mr John Schuessler from Huffmann, Texas, that took place in December 1980. Vicky, her 7-year-old grandson Colby, and her friend Betty were driving down a narrow wooded road at about 9 p.m. when a brightly-lit, diamond shaped object descended from the sky and hovered in front of them, belching flames and emitting a 'whooshing noise'. Terrified, the two women got out of the car and huddled beside it. Inside, Colby began to scream in fright as the car heated up unbearably. Finally the object moved away, rising over the trees. And in the glare of its lights the witnesses saw a horde of helicopters scudding around and above the craft.

Worse was to come. Within half an hour Betty began to develop blisters on her face. Her eyes swelled and closed, and in a few days her hair began to drop out. Suffering splitting headaches and frequent vomiting she was eventually hospitalised for 15 days. Vicky's sight was affected too, and she lost some hair, though having been better protected by the car her injuries were less. Colby became incontinent and had nightmares for weeks.

If this isn't a case of a military operation gone haywire, what is it? Mr Schuessler managed to find a USAF major who admitted to piloting one of the helicopters, but who would (or could) say no more. Certainly the craft seems consistent with what one knows of experimental tank-hunting drones that probably use microwave devices to 'neutralise' their targets. John Schuessler is continuing the investigation; meanwhile, the victims are planning to sue the US government in an attempt to crack the case open.

From two highly material pieces of UFO evidence the conference turned to the nebulous world of the contactees and abductees. The most radical suggestion came from Professor Alvin Lawson, whose experiments with regressive hypnosis in 1977 showed how unreliable the technique is in gathering evidence of UFOs, since non-contactees

continued overleaf